



ALL INDIAN PUEBLO COUNCIL

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**Federal Communications Commission Hearing Oral Testimony
by
Chairman Stanley Pino**

**"OVERCOMING OBSTACLES TO TELEPHONE SERVICE FOR INDIANS ON
RESERVATIONS"**

January 29, 1999

Albuquerque, New Mexico

Chairman Kennard, we welcome you to the Land of Enchantment. Commissioner Tristani, we welcome you home. Congressman Wilson and Congressman Udall, we are pleased with your presence here today, but we are most especially pleased with your presence in Washington, D.C. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for having this hearing and for inviting me to testify on behalf on the All Indian Pueblo Council and the Pueblo governments and Pueblo people we serve.

We support you in your work to overcome obstacles to telephone service for Indian Pueblo on reservations, there are 70,000 pueblo Indian citizens on the Nineteen New Mexico pueblos. Majority of them are eighteen years of age or younger. It is very important for our youth that we correct the lack of affordable telephone service which impedes their access to knowledge and education and for elderly to insure access to emergency services. As the Chairman, I share the commitment of every pueblo tribal governor to better health care, higher quality education and stronger tribal economies.

While we share common concerns, each pueblo has its own individual economy, geographic location and population profile. I am pleased to see the Governors from Picuris, Jemez and Zuni are testifying. It is also my understanding that you and/or your eyes will be visiting our great need for expanded and affordable telephone services for the Pueblos.

For some time now, we here in the West have been witnessing an unusual migration. People come here to enjoy our air and sunsets but, with the benefit of high quality communications technology they maintain their "office", a business presence in Chicago or San Francisco or New York City. They must have access to several telephone lines for business success and personal needs. They have adequate telephone service

to do this. We want the same opportunity in our tribal offices and homes to access and interact with the outside world and take advantage of opportunities located far from our remote communities.

We view the right to meet our personal, governmental and professional needs as a basic right as American citizens and recipients of the Federal trust relationship. When we learn that the National average telephone penetration rate for most American communities is ninety-eight percent while we are struggling to get even forty percent in many of the pueblo, then we know there is something wrong. We look to you, the President and the Congress to help correct this imbalance.

Our financial resources to overcome these telephone penetration deficiencies are generally quite limited both tribally and personally. As tribes work to establish independent, self-sustaining diverse economies, we do indeed focus on our needs on 10 years, twenty year, one hundred years from now. We need your assistance in forging sound, mutually beneficial business relationships with the telephone companies and others here today who are necessary in this process. Carefully structured relationships with the state which reflect respect for our sovereignty may be appropriate to consider.

Our communities are dealing with health problems which are peculiar to us in some ways, but not so much in others. Diabetes, substance abuse, tuberculosis, and HIV/AIDS could each e better diagnosed, treated and reported with stronger communications technology. We see on television that remote geographical locations are made less so by the miracles to telemedical service. We deserve the same opportunity.

It is important to us, as traditional Pueblo citizens to zealously protect our cultural heritage, identity and practices. Having strong, up-to-date telecommunications technology puts us in stronger control of protecting ourselves. It is for these same reasons we became fluent in the Spanish and English languages. Please help us become fluent with the internet language of today.

We want to "have our sunsets" and make a good living, too. We want to be safe in our homes and to be able to give our children every possible advantage. To do so, we need affordable telephone service, adequate lines and serious respect for our cultural identities.

Thank you for your attention. I reserve the right, on behalf of the Pueblos, to submit written testimony and respectfully request the record be kept open forty-five days.